

making tracks

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Restored Fresno Santa Fe Depot Dedicated

The newly restored and rehabilitated Fresno Santa Fe Depot—located at 2650 Tulare Street—was dedicated February 12, 2005 at a grand public celebration that drew close to 1,000 people. The station serves Amtrak California San Joaquin passenger trains and connecting Thruway Motorcoach service. Local and state officials participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially dedicate the restored Fresno Amtrak Station.

The \$7 million restoration project includes new and enlarged Amtrak passenger ticketing and waiting areas, including a large ticketing counter, business offices, adjacent retail space, increased parking, new landscaping and better access for buses, taxis and pedestrians. The station now has the appearance of the original California Mission-style station when it first opened in 1899 with important interior and exterior architectural details restored. Additions made to the station over the years have been removed and the station clock and clock tower have been restored.

During the public dedication, docents from the nearby historic Meux House Museum, dressed in period costumes, pointed out features of the station. The Waiting Room and Ticket Office resembles how the station looked in 1899, while providing modern functional requirements for Amtrak's ticketing operation. Two original fireplaces, which once served to heat the Waiting Room, have been restored, and though not functional, are now part of the modern air-conditioning system. The Waiting Room floor is finished with Ceramic Mosaic Tile in a pattern appropriate to the 1899 to 1924 era. The original Entry Vestibule marble mosaic floor has been preserved and repaired with a new marble tile mosaic border.

Exterior colors match the 1899 station. Doors at the Tulare Street end of the station are originals and original windows have been repaired. Windows on the second floor had been removed and plastered shut during the 1950s. New windows were fabricated from drawings and set in place.

Major funding for the restoration came from the California Department of Transportation and the City of Fresno. The City of Fresno

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Photo by Dick Friedman

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purchased the building and land from Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company. Other fund contributors were California Pollution Control Financing Authority and the State of California Office of Historic Preservation.

"The Department of Transportation has partnered with many cities to construct and rehabilitate train stations along the state's intercity routes," said Bill Bronte, Acting Chief of the Caltrans Division of Rail. "The restored Fresno Station salutes the growth and success of passenger rail travel today, while paying tribute to the rich history of railroad activity in California."

Fresno is served by 12 daily San Joaquin trains, six northbound and six southbound. Eight of the 12 trains are in service between Oakland and Bakersfield, and four trains travel between Sacramento and Bakersfield.

Explore "Ocean Discovery" at Six Flags Marine World

A new attraction will open at Six Flags Marine World in Vallejo this spring. It's called "Ocean Discovery", a unique Caribbean-themed ocean experience where park visitors will have the opportunity to touch, feed and play with Atlantic dolphins at specific times during the day under the guidance of park trainers; view up close warm-weather penguins as they frolic in their outdoor pool, replicating their natural habitat; feed exotic stingrays and pet their slippery skin; and, enjoy a new Sea Lion Show, with sea lions and river otters demonstrating an array of animal acrobatics.

Six Flags Marine World includes 35 wild rides, nine entertaining shows, and more than 3,000 rare and exotic animals, including Shouka, a killer whale that glides through the water at top speed, bursts into the air, then splashes down to create a massive water wave that drenches those in the "Shouka Splash Zone."

To reach Six Flags Marine World, take San Joaquin train #711 to Martinez. An Amtrak Thruway Motorcoach will be standing by for the quick ride directly to the Six Flags Marine World gate. The return motorcoach leaves at 5:20 p.m. to connect with southbound train #718.

For train schedules and fares, call 1-800-USA-RAIL or visit www.amtrak.com. Amtrak offers passengers reduced admission to the park — \$24.99 when purchased with your rail ticket. When speaking to an Amtrak agent, refer to city code ZMW. Group travel on the train to the park is available at attractive group rates. For information on Six Flags Marine World, including operating hours, visit www.sixflags.com or call 707-643-6722. Holiday Inn Vallejo at Marine World is offering a discount for Amtrak passengers. Just ask for 7-AMT when you book your room (space available basis only). Call 707-644-1200 or visit www.holidayinnvallejo.com.

Letters to Amtrak California

During the period when service on the Pacific Surfliner coast route was interrupted, one Amtrak passenger had nothing but praise for his experience aboard three Amtrak trains and a Thruway motorcoach.

Mr. Arlen Sheldrake and his wife were returning to Portland, Oregon from a Mexican Riviera cruise in late February. Their ship docked in San Diego and they boarded a northbound Pacific Surfliner train and checked a considerable amount of luggage through to Portland. Amtrak staff at San Diego warned them that the luggage might be delayed because the Sheldrakes would be making several connections over a two-day period before

arriving home. The Sheldrakes rode the Pacific Surfliner to Los Angeles, transferred to a Thruway motorcoach to connect with a San Joaquin train at Bakersfield and spent the night in Sacramento. The following day they boarded the Coast Starlight in Sacramento and arrived in Portland that evening. And their luggage was aboard the train with them the whole way.

In the words of Mr. Sheldrake, "The competence of your staff members who got our baggage on and off three trains and one bus is very commendable. Our thanks to you and your staff members for making the conclusion of our two week trip very enjoyable."

Pacific Surfliner Service Increases Between Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo

Through the unique partnership of Amtrak, California Department of Transportation and Metrolink, an additional Pacific Surfliner train is in service between Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo. The 7:30 a.m. departure from Los Angeles takes over a time slot previously filled by Metrolink and continues to serve Metrolink stops at Downtown Burbank and Northridge.

There are now five daily roundtrip trains serving Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties and two daily roundtrip trains continuing to San Luis Obispo. There are 11 daily roundtrip Pacific Surfliner trains in service between Los Angeles and San Diego, with a 12th roundtrip on weekends.

Los Angeles and Ventura County passengers have another opportunity to participate in the popular Rail2Rail cross-ticketing program. Metrolink monthly pass holders may ride Pacific Surfliner trains within the trip limits of their monthly pass at no extra cost. Pacific Surfliner ticket holders may ride Metrolink trains within the limit of their ticket at no extra charge.

"The integrated transit program, known as Rail2Rail, allows a single ticket to provide a greater number of departure and arrival options," said Will Kempton, Director of the California Department of Transportation. "With the morning departure from Los Angeles and early afternoon return, this train provides passengers with more rail travel opportunities between Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo than ever before."



At the inaugural ceremonies in Los Angeles to introduce the new Pacific Surfliner train, Councilman Dennis P. Zine presented Certificates from the City of Los Angeles. Left to right in the picture are Councilman Zine; Bill Alexander, Chairman, SCRRA Board of Directors; Will Kempton, Director, California Department of Transportation; Lynn Berberian, Superintendent—Passenger Services, Amtrak; Art Brown, Chairman, LOSSAN Board of Directors; and, Randell Iwasaki, Chief Deputy Director, Caltrans.

Dramatic Increases in Ridership

It was another outstanding quarter for passenger ridership on Amtrak California Pacific Surfliner and San Joaquin trains.

During the last quarter of 2004—October–November–December—Pacific Surfliner trains carried 596,835 passengers, an increase of 16.9% over the same period in 2003. In December alone, more than 200,000—202,709—passengers rode the trains, a huge increase of 23.3% over the previous December.

San Joaquin trains also posted higher passenger traffic in the October through December period over the previous year. Some 187,336 passengers rode San Joaquin trains, an increase of 5.1% over 2003. And another record year was recorded in November, when 64,506 passengers rode the trains, an increase of 5.1% over a record setting November 2003.

Santa Barbara Car Free Vacation Package

The Santa Barbara Car Free Project, which encourages car free travel to and around Santa Barbara to promote cleaner air, has announced a new 2005 Vacation Package that includes significant discounts of up to 50% at 17 Santa Barbara hotels, four popular local restaurants, and 11 area activities including kayaking, whale watching, bike and rollerblade rentals and wine country excursions.

As a special bonus, visitors that register at www.santabarbaracarfree.org will receive a Free Companion Fare coupon for travel on Pacific Surfliner or Coast Starlight trains serving Santa Barbara.

To receive full information on the 2005 Santa Barbara Car Free Vacation Package and receive a special map, travelers should go to the Santa Barbara Car Free website (above), call 805/696-1100 or send a postcard with name and address to Box 60436, Santa Barbara CA 93160.

Chef Mario: The Man Behind the Food

When it comes to food, San Joaquin trains are unique in the Amtrak system. Most passengers on short distance trains must make do with snacks and light beverages. But San Joaquin customers are able to enjoy fresh sandwiches and the ambiance of “dinner in the diner” for a modest price due to the creativity and skill of Mario Garcia, affectionately known by his fans as “Chef Mario”.

Garcia has a 30-year career as chef, caterer, and restaurant owner to his credit. He prides himself on being able to provide cuisine that runs the gamut from classic entrées to good old-fashioned comfort food. His multi-cultural approach to cuisine is inspired by a rich and diversified family ancestry as well as culinary world travel to Asia, Europe and the Pacific Islands. Throw in a childhood culinary interest in New England and East Coast ethnic cooking and you have quite a repertoire of food choices and styles.

Amtrak’s national caterer, Gate Gourmet, provides most of the food onboard San Joaquin trains. In order to preserve something of the traditional dining car experience, however, Caltrans and Amtrak conducted a search four years ago for a chef to devise economical over-the-counter tray meals that could be eaten either in the dining car or at customers’ seats. For \$8 to \$9 (even less for breakfast), diners are served a salad, roll and one of three hot entrées and a vegetable. In a statewide competition that was based on taste, creativity and value, Chef Mario won the contract to create, present and prepare these meals for San Joaquin trains.

As a result, for the past four years Chef Mario has brought restaurant taste to the onboard dining experience on Amtrak California San Joaquin trains. His

challenge is to create entrées that can be prepared in large quantities yet still retain a cooked one-at-a-time flavor and appearance. These entrées must also retain freshness when chilled and, when reheated in a microwave oven, retain their fresh color, taste and texture. To accomplish all this, Chef Mario begins by working with Amtrak and Caltrans to determine how many items will be featured on the hot entrée menu. For example, Amtrak and Caltrans will request a fish entrée, a chicken entrée, pasta dish, and beef entrée. Chef Mario will then go back to his kitchen and create unique dishes featuring the selected main ingredients.



New food items are prepared and served as they would be on the train to an impartial panel of tasters recruited from Amtrak, Caltrans and rider/stakeholder groups. Final selections are based on input from all the panelists before the new entrées are approved for the current menu cycle aboard the train. Under Chef Mario’s guidance, the catering kitchen gets to work preparing the entrées, packaging the meals and including instructions for Amtrak Service Attendants on how long to reheat the meals in the onboard microwave ovens.

“Creating new dishes is the most satisfying part of my job,” claims Chef Mario. “I have the opportunity to bring restaurant quality food to Amtrak passengers using everything I know about food preparation, about taste and appearance, and best of all – what people like to eat.”

And “what people like to eat” is now being served on the San Joaquin trains every day.

So go ahead and enjoy a Chef Mario entrée and be part of the modern onboard dining experience.

State-owned Locomotives to Test Clean Air Technology

A National Diesel Retrofit Grant of \$150,000 will fund installation of exhaust scrubbers on two Caltrans-owned Amtrak California locomotives this year. The scrubbers are designed to reduce nitrous oxide emissions and particulate matter by 25 to 30 percent from diesel motors providing Head End Power to

operate electrical systems onboard the trains. The scrubbers should also reduce exhaust noise produced by the locomotives. Installation of the units will take place this fall as part of the ongoing diesel locomotive rebuild program. Sacramento Air Quality Management District is recipient of the federal EPA grant

and is partnering with Caltrans on this clean air project. Amtrak California diesel locomotives were built by the Electromotive Division of General Motors in 1992, and were the first diesel locomotives in operation in the US to meet the tough new federal environmental standards, referred to then as Tier 0.

New San Joaquin Menu Debuts

Amtrak California has rolled out the new taste-tested Spring 2005 menu for its San Joaquin trains. The Amtrak dining car attendant prepares each entrée as it is ordered. Meals may be enjoyed at one of the tables in the dining car or carried back to your seat. Menu prices range between \$7.25 for breakfast entrées and up to \$9.00 for lunch/dinner entrées.

Featured breakfast items include a ham and cheese omelet accompanied by fruit, potatoes and a warm biscuit; and fluffy scrambled eggs with Parmesan cheese, sausage links and fresh fruit. Those who enjoy salad can satisfy their appetite with a chicken Caesar salad, while pasta devotees will want to order the cheese tortellini, stuffed with a blend of Romano, ricotta and mozzarella cheeses, spinach and tomatoes in a savory garlic basil sauce. The pasta entrée includes a salad and dinner roll.

For those who enjoy pork, Amtrak California serves up boneless pork topped with a zesty mix of black and white bean salsa accompanied by Chef Mario's special recipe chuckwagon corn, a fresh green salad and dinner roll. And for those looking to watch calories, honey mustard chicken breast fills the bill, accompanied with mixed vegetables, a fresh green salad and dinner roll.

Each July an impartial panel of tasters selects the coming year's entrées from among the many offerings prepared by Amtrak's caterer. San Joaquin menus are changed in February, June and October and will, over the course of the year, include all the items selected by the panel at its annual summer taste test.

Strawberries Take Center Stage

May is the month when the famous red berry that wears its seeds on the outside is the most brilliant and luscious. So it is only natural that America's favorite versatile red fruit takes center stage at the 22nd Annual California Strawberry Festival in Oxnard during the weekend of May 14 and 15. From 10:00 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. both days indulge in all things strawberry.

At the California Strawberry Festival the popular berries are definitely the main ingredients in just about everything edible. From strawberry kabobs, chocolate dipped and frosted strawberry shaped cookies, to strawberry cotton candy, strawberry margaritas, hot dogs with strawberry barbeque sauce, and even Chinese chicken salad with strawberry dressing, there is something to tempt every appetite. For those who like controlling their own destiny, a visit to the "Build Your Own" strawberry shortcake tent is a must on the day's itinerary. Proceeds from food and concession sales benefit more than 15 local non-profit groups throughout the extended Ventura area. Since the Festival's inception more than \$2 million has gone back into the tri-county community.

Now ranked among the top outdoor festivals in the nation, the California Strawberry Festival features live entertainment on two stages, Strawberryland For Kids with free rides, attractions and a tented amphitheatre showcase, a climbing wall, strolling performers and a prestigious Fine Arts & Crafts showcase with over 300 booths.

For Amtrak passengers, a trip to the California Strawberry Festival is hassle free. Just disembark at Oxnard Amtrak Station and a complimentary shuttle takes passengers to the Festival site. For train schedules and fares, call 1-800-USA-Rail or visit www.amtrak.com. For more information on the California Strawberry Festival call 1-888-288-9242 or visit www.strawberry-fest.org.

Back On Track

When California was slammed by a series of powerful winter storms in January and February, mudslides and swollen rivers halted Amtrak service in Southern California. Railroad crews assessed damage to rail infrastructure and swung into action to lay new track, replace eroded roadbed and repair bridge structures and signals. At one point crews had to remove a huge boulder that had come to rest in the middle of the rail right of way. Amtrak connecting motorcoach service helped bridge the gap while rail crews worked to reopen the rail line.

On February 27, all Amtrak California Pacific Surfliner service was restored between Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo. Coast Starlight service began running on the coast line on March 1.

Disneyland Celebrates 50th Anniversary with the “Happiest Homecoming on Earth”

To celebrate its 50th Anniversary, Disneyland will launch the Happiest Homecoming on Earth on May 5, 2005, where new and returning guests will be invited to enjoy new shows and attractions.

- Sleeping Beauty Castle will be the focal point for the Happiest Homecoming on Earth. It will be decorated with royal banners, precious stones, decorative gold and topped by five regal turret crowns.
- The all-new “Walt Disney’s Parade of Dreams” will feature one of the largest casts of Disney Characters and performers ever assembled.

- “Remember...Dreams Come True” will be the most elaborate fireworks spectacular in Disneyland history. Highlights will be a musical score, dramatic close proximity pyrotechnics, lighting effects and never-before-seen fireworks.
- Buzz Lightyear Astro Blasters is a new Tomorrowland attraction. Visitors will pilot their own Star Cruiser through a comical interactive space mission.
- Space Mountain re-opens featuring a new queue and Space Port, redesigned rockets, on-board audio soundtrack and some new special effects.
- “Disneyland... The First 50 Magical Years” is a new exhibit showcasing 50 years of Disneyland with never-before-seen artwork, models and designs. A special film produced for the exhibit highlights the evolution of Disneyland.



Sleeping Beauty Castle

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To reach Disneyland Resort, take Amtrak California’s Pacific Surfliner to the Anaheim Station. Disneyland Resort entrance plaza is a short taxi ride from the train station. Eleven weekday and twelve weekend roundtrip Pacific Surfliner trains serve Anaheim. And don’t forget, Kids Ride Half Price all year long. So get onboard and head for the happiest homecoming on earth. For complete information on schedules and fares call Amtrak at 1-800-USA-RAIL or visit www.amtrak.com. To learn more about Disneyland’s 50th Anniversary visit www.disneyland.com/50th.



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